



THE VANISHING BOMBERS

They didn't crash –
yet they failed to
return from their
death-dealing
missions !



4

ALL-ACTION ISSUES EVERY MONTH

★ No. 145 **FIGHTING COMMAND**

Every time he risked his life, the fate of a division hung in the balance.

★ No. 146 **TIME FUSE**

Ten seconds to zero . . . the countdown to destruction !

★ No. 147 **THE COURAGE OF A LION**

There is no tougher breed than the commandos !

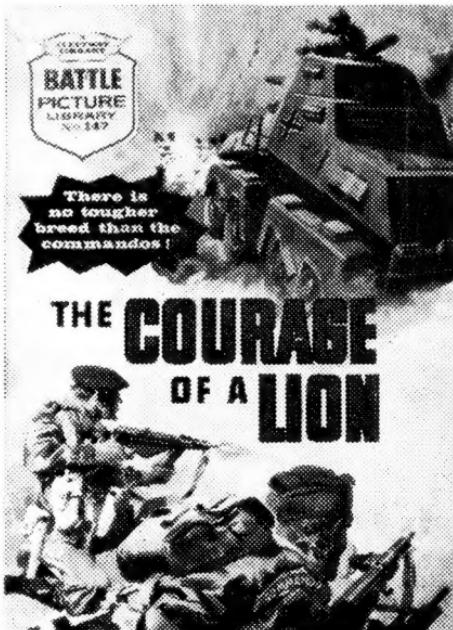
★ No. 148 **SWORD OF HONOUR**

They wore their badge of shame into the last great battle . . .

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THE VANISHING BOMBERS

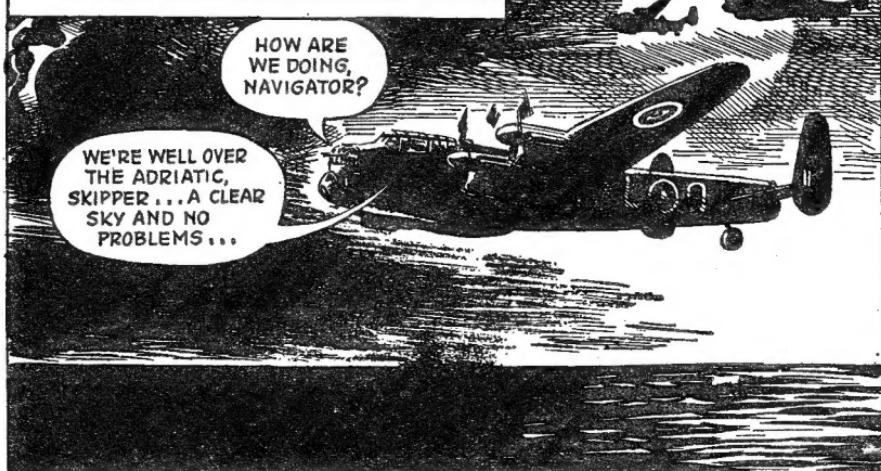
FLAK BARRAGES THAT TURNED THE SKIES INTO AN INFERNO OF FIRE AND FLYING STEEL . . . ENEMY FIGHTERS THAT SWOOPED LIKE WOLVES ON CRIPPLED PLANES . . . THESE WERE NORMAL HAZARDS OF BOMBER CREWS IN WORLD WAR II. **BUT NO.3 SPECIAL SERVICE LANCASTER SQUADRON RAN INTO AN EVEN MORE SINISTER MENACE IN THE HOSTILE SKIES OVER ITALY** . . .

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
O-ORANGE IS MISSING! . . .
THAT'S THE THIRD LANCASTER
IN SEVEN DAYS THAT HAS
JUST VANISHED INTO
THIN AIR!



Chapter I. Unconscious Crew

O-ORANGE, HER BOMBING MISSION OVER MILAN COMPLETED, WAS HOMeward BOUND FOR THE BRITISH AIRFIELD AT BARI IN SOUTHERN ITALY...



BUT EVEN AS THE NAVIGATOR SAID THE WORDS HE SAW THE TWO HOSTILE PLANES HURTLING LIKE HAWKS TOWARDS THEM ...



The Vanishing Bombers

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MATT NICK, WHO HAD JOINED THE R.A.F. FROM CANADA, TO BECOME THE SQUADRON'S TOP-SCORING REAR-GUNNER, WAS KNOWN AS A COOL, COLD-BLOODED CUSTOMER . . .



AS THE FIRST MESSERSCHMITT 110 PITCHED IN FLAMES, THE DEADLY GUNS OF ITS PARTNER SPAT VENGEANCE AT THE LANCASTER . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

SUDDENLY, THE LANCASTER CREW HEARD THE FIERCE CLAMOUR AND SMELT PUNGENT ODOUR OF SPENT EXPLOSIVE THAT TOLD THEM MATT NICK WAS SHOOTING IT OUT WITH THE GERMAN FIGHTER . . .

WHO'S HIT WHO?

NICK'S
DONE IT . . .
HE'S GOT THE
SECOND JERRY!

THE JUBILANT CREW OF O-ORANGE CHEERED . . . ALL EXCEPT THE SILENT NICK, WHO MERELY CLEARED HIS GUNS READY FOR ANY FURTHER ATTACK . . .

GOOD FOR YOU,
NICK! FROM NOW
ON WE'RE IN A
FRIENDLY SKY... AND
ONLY TWENTY MINUTES
FROM BARI AND OUR
BACON AND EGGS!

O-ORANGE CALLING
CONTROL. MISSION
SUCCESSFUL... ESTIMATED
TIME OF ARRIVAL
OH-SIX-FOURTY HOURS...



The Vanishing Bombers

7

CHEERED BY THE SUCCESS OF THEIR
MISSION, O-ORANGE'S
CREW RELAXED . . .

YOU'RE THE ONLY CANADIAN
I EVER MET, NICK, WHO NEVER
WHOOPS IT UP AND
CELEBRATES...

I CELEBRATE
BY GIVING
YOU MY
SPECIAL
BLACK
COFFEE...

UNSMILING AS EVER, NICK
FILLED ALL THE MUGS
EXCEPT HIS OWN . . .

YOU'VE DOWNED FOUR
JERRY PLANES THIS MONTH,
NICK... COME ON, EVEN YOU
CAN RAISE A SMILE THIS
MORNING . . .

I DO NOT
SMILE WHEN
I KILL . . .

The Vanishing Bombers

AS THE CREW DRANK, MATT NICK
WATCHED THEM NARROWLY . . .
THEN, MINUTES LATER —

IT'S THE
COFFEE . . .

WHAT'S THE
MATTER WITH
ME... EVERYTHING
IS GOING
BLURRY!

THE PILOT WAS THE LAST TO COLLAPSE.
NICK CLAMBERED CATLIKE PAST THE
INERT FORMS OF THE SPROWLING
CREW . . .

THE LANDING
LIGHTS OF BARI
AIRFIELD ARE AHEAD
... I LEFT IT LATE
TO DISPOSE OF THE
CREW... I MUST
HURRY!

The Vanishing Bombers

9

THE LANCASTER BANKED IN A SHARP TURN AND HEADED BACK OVER THE ADRIATIC. NICK SWITCHED ON THE RADIO FREQUENCY . . .

MATNIC CALLING
X ZONE. AM FLYING
NORTH NORTH-EAST
FROM BARI. CAN
YOU HEAR ME,
X ZONE?

CANADA

DROPPING FLUENTLY INTO A FOREIGN TONGUE, THE REAR-GUNNER WHO NOW REVEALED HIS NAME AS MATNIC CALLED FOR ORDERS . . .

YOU HAD
BETTER HURRY,
X ZONE . . . I AM
OBSERVED BY
ANOTHER
LANCASTER . . .

X ZONE CALLING
MATNIC, CONTINUE
ON PRESENT COURSE.
YOUR HOMELAND
WELCOMES AND
SALUTES
YOU . . .

The Vanishing Bombers

AS DAWN BROKE OVER BARI AIRFIELD, A LAST LONE LANCASTER OF THE SPECIAL SQUADRON TAXIED IN FROM THE MILAN RAID . . .

GLAD YOU
MADE IT, MIKE.
O-ORANGE
IS MISSING.

SHE CAN'T
BE... I SAW HER
CIRCLING CLOSE BY
AS WE WERE MAKING
OUR LANDING-RUN!

FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT MIKE HAINES HAD
NO DOUBT THAT THE OVERDUE LANCASTER
WOULD BE LANDING
WITHIN MINUTES . . .

BACON AND EGGS
FOR G-GEORGE
NOW, COOK... AND
FOR O-ORANGE IN
ABOUT FIVE MINUTES!

SO
O-ORANGE
HAS
RETURNED?

The Vanishing Bombers

11

HEARING THE SURPRISED VOICE, MIKE TURNED TO SEE ONE OF THE FOREIGN MILITARY MISSIONS WHICH OCCASIONALLY VISITED BRITISH SQUADRONS. HIS SECOND PILOT, BUSTER BROWN, EXPLAINED . . .

IT'S THE TEAM OF OBSERVERS FROM CROSLAVIA . . . IT SEEMS NOTHING'S GONE RIGHT IN THE SQUADRON SINCE THEY ARRIVED LAST WEEK . . .

WHY SHOULD THEY BE SO INTERESTED IN O-ORANGE?

CROSLAVIA WAS A SMALL BALKAN STATE OCCUPIED BY THE NAZIS. ITS BRAVE GUERRILLA FIGHTERS STILL FOUGHT GALLANTLY AGAINST THEIR INVADERS . . .

MIKE FORGOT ABOUT THE INCIDENT UNTIL THE ADJUTANT STRODE IN . . .

O-ORANGE

WE'RE ALL GROUNDED?
THIS IS CRAZY!
WHAT'S UP?

IS STILL MISSING . . .
THE THIRD PLANE TO VANISH . . .

. . . SO ALL OUR AIRCRAFT ARE TO BE TESTED FOR ENGINE FAULTS.

FOR THREE DAYS THE AIRCREWS KICKED THEIR HEELS IN THE MESS, GRUMBLING AT THEIR ENFORCED IDLENESS . . .

ANOTHER DAY ON THE GROUND AND I'M PUTTING IN FOR A TRANSFER, MIKE.

GUESS WHO'S JUST BOWLED IN FROM NOWHERE . . . MATT NICK, O-ORANGE'S REAR-GUNNER!

The Vanishing Bombers

AIRCREW WHO RETURNED DAYS AFTER THEIR PLANE HAD BEEN GIVEN UP AS LOST ALWAYS RECEIVED A TUMULTUOUS WELCOME . . .



NICK WENT OFF TO REPORT TO THE C.O. . .



NICK'S ACCOUNT OF ENEMY ACTION BRINGING
DOWN HIS LANCASTER REMOVED THE C.O.'S
SUSPICIONS ABOUT ENGINE FAILURE . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

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MIKE ASKED THE ADJUTANT FOR AN EXTRA MAN TO COMPLETE THE CREW OF G-GEORGE ...

I WAS GOING TO GIVE YOU ONE OF OUR CROSLAVIAN VISITORS AS AN OBSERVER, MIKE ... BUT THE C.O. HAS FORBIDDEN IT ...

THE C.O.'S RIGHT ... THERE'S SOMETHING PHONEY ABOUT THOSE CHAPS ...

THE CROSLAVIAN MISSION WAS LEAVING FOR HOME NEXT DAY, AND NONE OF THE BRITISH SQUADRON WOULD BE SORRY TO SEE THEM GO ...

EACH OF OUR PLANES THAT VANISHED SO MYSTERIOUSLY LAST WEEK HAD A CROSLAVIAN ON BOARD ... IT COULD MEAN SOMETHING ... SO YOU'LL GET A PROPER CREW REPLACEMENT, MIKE...

DON'T WORRY, ADJ...
G-GEORGE IS A
NON-VANISHER!

ZO

The Vanishing Bombers

MIKE RETURNED TO G-GEORGE,
REPAIRED SINCE THE PREVIOUS
RAID . . .

WE'RE TO MAKE
A LOW LEVEL BOMBING
ATTACK ON THE
MARSHALLING YARDS
AT MODENA... BRIEFING
IN THREE MINUTES
FROM NOW.

PRANGING
TRAINS SUITS
ME!

AS DUSK DREW ON, THE SQUADRON STOOD-TO,
WITH ALL PREPARATIONS FOR THE RAID
COMPLETED . . .

HALLO, NICK...
WHERE DID YOU
SPRING FROM?

THE
ADJUTANT
SAYS I'M TO
FLY WITH YOU
TONIGHT IN
G-GEORGE...

The Vanishing Bombers

15

ALL ALONG THE FLYING ROUTE OF THE SPECIAL SQUADRON, THE GERMAN CONTROL POSTS PLOTTED THE PLANES' APPROACH WITH ARROWS ON GLASS MAPS . . .

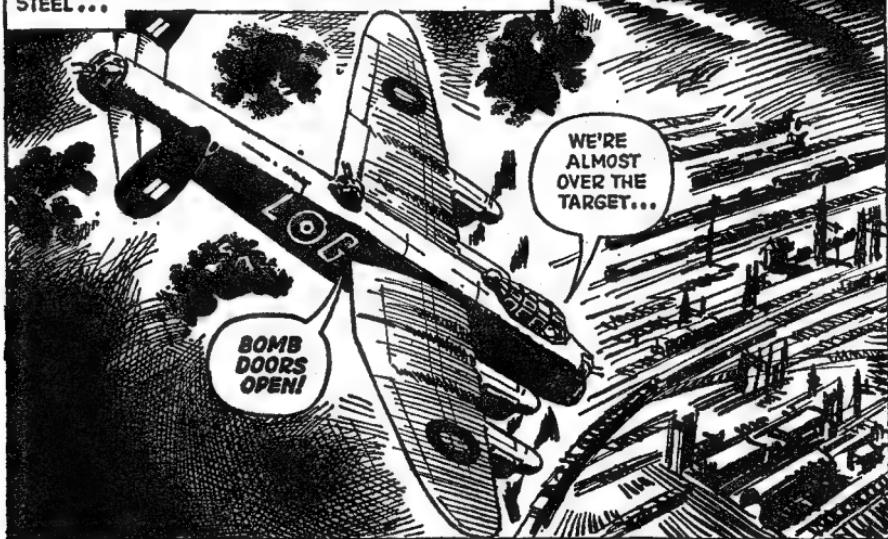


AS G-GEORGE SPED THROUGH THE NORTHERN ITALIAN SKIES NEAR MODENA, THE ALERTED GROUND DEFENCES Erupted WITH CASCADING METAL . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

THE NOSE OF THE LANCASTER DIPPED FOR THE STRAIGHT FIFTEEN-MILE RUN THROUGH A CURTAIN OF FLYING STEEL . . .



SUDDENLY G-GEORGE SEEMED TO BE PINNED TO THE SKY IN A BURST OF BLINDING LIGHT . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

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TO MIKE AND HIS CREW, G-GEORGE SEEMED HUGE AND VULNERABLE WITH EVERY GUN DOWN BELOW AIMING AT THEM. THE PLANE SWOOPED DANGEROUSLY LOW, AND . . .

THE MARSHALLING YARDS!

BOMB
GONE!

LUG

THE LANCASTER BUCKED LIKE A MUSTANG AS THE MARKER BOMB BURST INTO FLAME...

CLEAN AS
A WHISTLE
... BEST
EGG I EVER
LAID!

HALLO,
MAINFORCE . . .
WE'VE LIT THE
TARGET FOR
YOU!

THE GREEN AND WHITE LIGHTS OF THE FLARE-BOMB LIT THE RAILWAYS LIKE A FAIRGROUND, AND MIKE HURLED THE LANCASTER INTO A STEEP CLIMB . . .

ENEMY
FIGHTERS
ASTERN!

I'M GOING TO
DIVE PAST THE
SEARCHLIGHTS. WHY
ISN'T OUR NEW REAR-GUNNER HAVING
A GO?

The Vanishing Bombers

HEADING DOWN THE BLINDING BEAM, MIKE
HOPED TO SHAKE OFF THE JUNKERS 88S,
SWEEPING IN HIS
REAR . . .

NICK'S GOT
ONE OF THEM...
WHAT A
GUNNER!

HE'S
ON TO A
SECOND
ONE...

ALL AT ONCE THE SEARCHLIGHTS WERE LIFTED FROM
G-GEORGE, PROBING INSTEAD FOR THE MAIN FORCE
WHICH WERE DROPPING THEIR BOMBS . . .

THE JERRIES WON'T
GET A TRAIN OUT OF
HERE FOR MONTHS,
MIKE.

WE'LL
JOIN IN
FROM THE NORTH
AND DROP THE
REST OF OUR
BOMB LOAD.

The Vanishing Bombers

19

AGAIN G-GEORGE PLUNGED INTO THE FLARE-LIT AREA OF VICIOUS FLAK AND TRACER . . .

DON'T LOUNGE ABOUT, TODD . . .
DROP THE COOKIES!

SOMETHING'S
WRONG, MIKE . . .
OUR FIVE-HUNDRED-
POUNDERS WON'T
GO DOWN!

AGAIN MIKE WHEELED OVER THE BLAZE OF LIGHTS AND ROLLING SMOKE . . . AND AGAIN TODD, THE BOMB-AIMER, TRIED TO RELEASE THEM . . .

IT'S NO GOOD,
MIKE . . . MAYBE A
BULLET HAS JAMMED
THE BOMB-RELEASE.

HALLO, G-GEORGE...
STOP STOOGING... FOLLOW
MAINFORCE HOME . . .
WE'VE FINISHED HERE.

The Vanishing Bombers

AS THE BATTLE-BATTERED SQUADRON HEADED FOR THE COAST AND THE SOUTHERN RUN TO BARI, MIKE PULLED G-GEORGE AWAY FROM THE FLAK.

WHAT A TURN-UP...
ALL WE DROPPED WERE THE SPARKLERS TO LIGHT THE SHOW.

WE'LL BE OVER THE ADRIATIC IN A FEW MINUTES
... WHO'S GOT THE COFFEE FLASK?

THE SILENT NICK PRODUCED HIS BIG FLASK.

I LOOK AFTER YOU ALL.

I WASN'T TOO KEEN ON HAVING NICK IN OUR CREW BUT WE'D HAVE BEEN SHOT DOWN WITHOUT HIM.

OVER THE FRIENDLY SEA THEY RELAXED, BUT SUDDENLY . . .

NICK...
WHAT HAVE YOU GIVEN US?

THE COFFEE...
IT'S POISONED!

MIKE DROPPED HIS MUG, FIGHTING THE HAZE THAT CLOGGED HIS MOVEMENTS.

YOU SNAKE!

I FIGHT FOR MY FATHERLAND!



WITH ALL HIS REMAINING STRENGTH, MIKE SWUNG AT NICK. NICK DODGED ASIDE AND —

TOO LATE, MY FRIEND . . . TONIGHT G-GEORGE HAS A NEW CAPTAIN AND FLIES TO A NEW SERVICE AND A NEW CAUSE! MY COFFEE HAS DONE ITS WORK WELL!



Chapter 2.

Captured!

SWINGING EAST ACROSS THE ADRIATIC, THE LONE LANCASTER DRONED OVER THE DARK COAST TO MEET THE DAWN. THE PLANE WAS SEEN BY TWO CROSLAVIAN GUERRILLA FIGHTERS.



THE MAN THE BRITISH KNEW AS NICK STEERED THE PLANE INTO THE VALLEY, DROPPING EXPERTLY DOWN TO A ROUGH LANDING-STRIP . . .



REVERTING TO HIS MOTHER TONGUE, MATNIC GREETED THE GUERILLA LEADER WITH RESPECT . . .

THIS TIME, GENERAL NOVARICH,
I FIXED THE BOMBING MECHANISM
. . . SO THIS PLANE STILL
HAS ITS HEAVY
BOMBS.

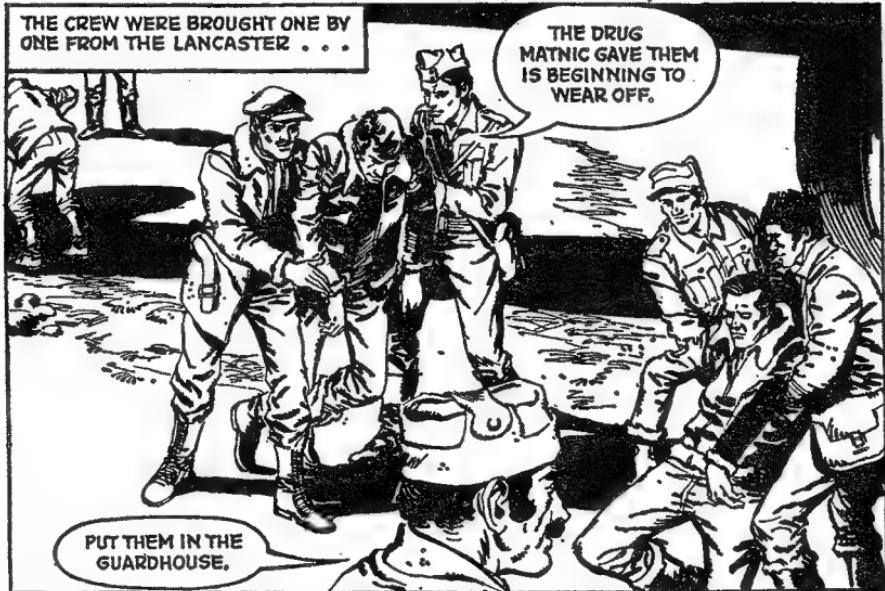
NOW WE
CAN DEAL
WITH OUR
ENEMIES!

.NOVARICH BECKONED MATNIC TO FOLLOW HIM . . .

THEY WILL
KEEP, MATNIC—
WE HAVE PLANS
TO MAKE.

ARE STILL UNCONSCIOUS . . .
TREAT THEM WELL . . . THEY
ARE ALL MEN
OF COURAGE.

The Vanishing Bombers



The Vanishing Bombers

25

PART OF THE VILLA HAD BEEN CONVERTED INTO A PRISON. SUDDENLY BUSTER GAVE A GASP.

SO THESE DOUBLE-CROSSERS GOT YOU, TOO, MIKE?

STONE THE CROWS . . . IT'S THE CREW OF O-ORANGE AND THE OTHER TWO PLANES THAT VANISHED!



COLD RAGE FILLED MIKE AS HE REALISED HOW THE LANCASTER CREWS HAD BEEN TRAPPED . . .

THAT CROSLAV MILITARY MISSION GOT TWO OF OUR PLANES, AND THAT ARCH-TWISTER MATNIC GOT TWO . . . CANADIAN OR NOT, HE'S CROSLAV BY BIRTH.

THEY CALL THEMSELVES THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS!



The Vanishing Bombers

AS MIKE DISCUSSED POSSIBILITIES OF A BREAK-OUT, THE DOOR WAS UNLOCKED AND MATNIC ENTERED — NOW IN UNIFORM.

GENERAL NOVARICH WILL SEE THE SENIOR SECTION LEADER OF OUR R.A.F. GUESTS . . .

I'LL SEE YOUR PHONEY GENERAL.



THE MAN WHO HAD FLOWN WITH THE R.A.F. AS MATT NICK, GESTURED THE GUARDS TO FOLLOW . . .

WE BOTH FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY... OUR FREEDOM FIGHTERS DESERVE BRITISH SUPPORT . . .

BRITAIN'S GIVEN HER SUPPORT TO THE PARTISANS IN THE NORTH . . . YOUR BUNCH OF TREACHEROUS BANDITS WILL GET NOTHING OUT OF US!



The Vanishing Bombers

27

MATNIC LED THE WAY TO A STUDY FITTED UP AS A WAR-ROOM . . .

ONLY ONE MAN, OUR LEADER, IS CAPABLE OF

SAVING OUR UNHAPPY COUNTRY . . . AND THAT IS THE TIGER OF CROSSLAVIA . . . GENERAL NOVARICH . . .



NOVARICH, THE TIGER, SWUNG ROUND TO HIS WAR MAP . . .

A STRONG FORCE COMMANDING THE RUINED TOWN OF PETROVIC WOULD CLEARLY COMMAND THE WHOLE AREA . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

THE CREWS WERE RELEASED TO SHARE THE AVAILABLE BOMB-LOADS BETWEEN THE FOUR LANCASTERS AND PREPARE FOR THEIR MISSION. BUSTER BROWN HAD A WORD WITH MIKE.



The Vanishing Bombers

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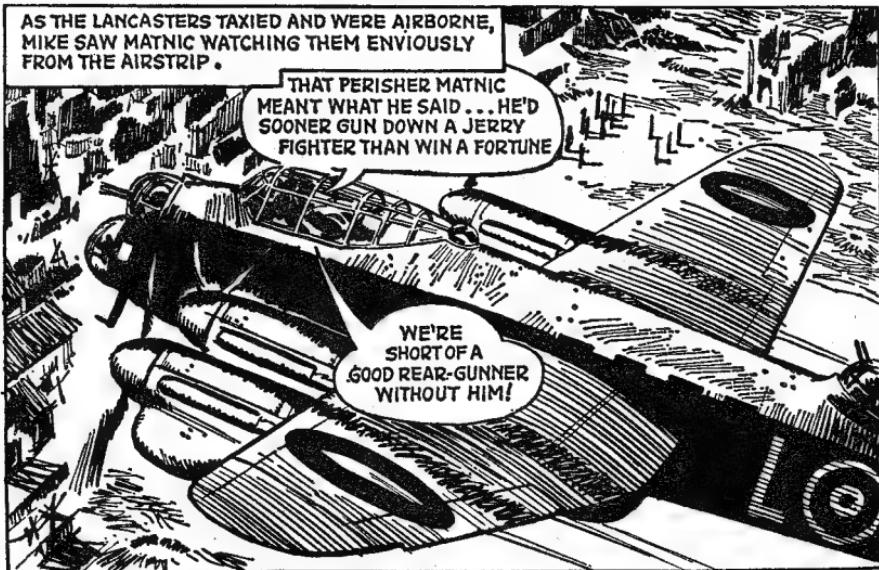
A GUERRILLA TO GUARD THEM JOINED THE CREW OF EACH PLANE . . .



AS MIKE PREPARED TO START UP, HE SAW A FAMILIAR FIGURE WATCHING THEM.

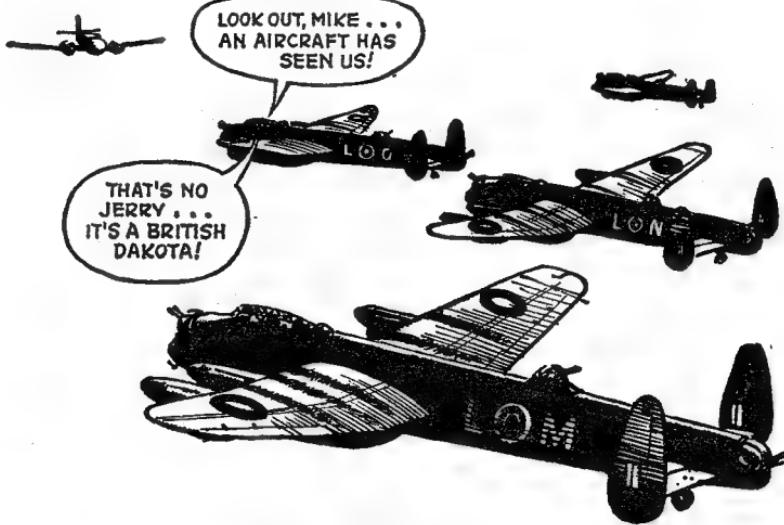


AS THE LANCASTERS TAXIED AND WERE AIRBORNE, MIKE SAW MATNIC WATCHING THEM ENVIOUSLY FROM THE AIRSTRIP.



The Vanishing Bombers

BUT ON THEIR ROUTE TO PETROVIC THEY SAW NO FIGHTERS, AND THEN —



THE DAKOTA FLASHED ITS ALDIS LAMP IN FRIENDLY GREETING
AND DRONED AHEAD OF THE RAIDERS . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

31

THE SURPRISED CREW OF G-GEORGE
IGNORED THE BARKED ORDERS OF
THEIR ARMED GUARD . . .

GET ON WITH
YOUR BUSINESS
OF BOMBING!

WHY
SHOULD A
BRITISH PLANE
DELIBERATELY
LAND IN A
JERRY CAMP?
I'M TAKING A
CLOSER LOOK
AT THIS
PLACE!

MEETING NO ENEMY FIRE, MIKE PUT
G-GEORGE ON A HEDGE-HOPPING RUN
OVER THEIR TARGET AREA . . .

THOSE MEN
BELOW ARE NOT
RUNNING FOR COVER,
MIKE . . . THEY'RE
WAVING US HALLO!

THAT'S NO
GERMAN CAMP . . .
THEY'RE PARTISANS
AND BRITISH!



The Vanishing Bombers

G-GEORGE BANKED AND SWEPT SKYWARDS AGAIN . . .



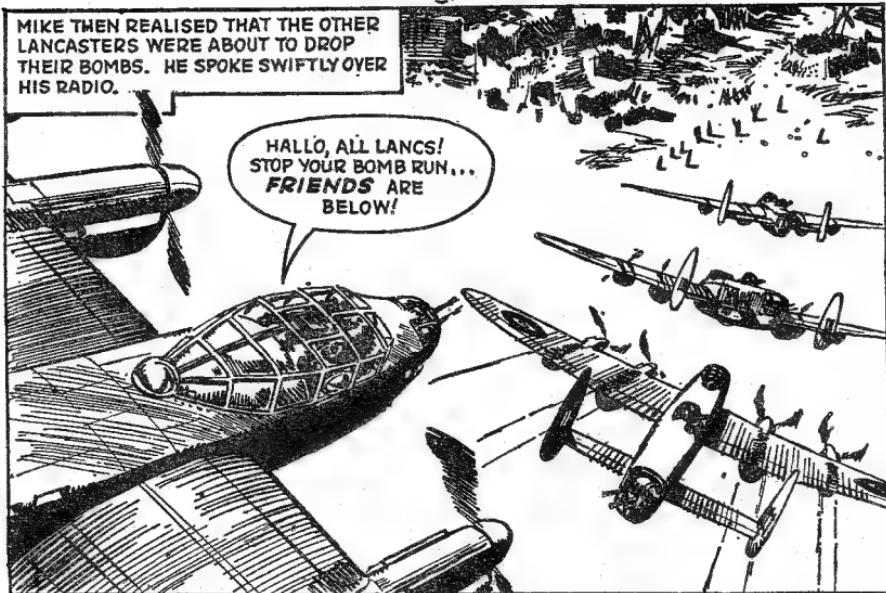
'THEIR GUARD CLICKED THE BOLT OF HIS STEN THREATENINGLY . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

33

MIKE THEN REALISED THAT THE OTHER LANCASTERS WERE ABOUT TO DROP THEIR BOMBS. HE SPOKE SWIFTLY OVER HIS RADIO.



ONE BY ONE, THE BRITISH PLANES PEELED OFF AND ROARED AWAY FROM THE BATTERED MOUNTAIN TOWN. THE GUARD IN G-GEORGE THEN WHIPPED ROUND ON BUSTER.



The Vanishing Bombers

BUT THE BAFFLED GUERRILLA WAS THE LEAST OF THEIR DANGERS . . .

JERRY FIGHTERS . . .
WE'VE GOT TO GET
WEAVING!

AND US
WITH ONLY
CHARLIE HERE
FOR A
REAR-GUNNER!

THREE MESSERSCHMITTS SCREAMED DOWN FROM THE NORTH.

O-ORANGE CALLING . . .
WE'VE ONLY TEN MORE MINUTES'
FLYING TIME, MIKE, BEFORE
THE TIME CHARGE BLOWS.

AND ENEMY AIRCRAFT
ARE ON OUR TAILS! SCATTER
AND MAKE FOR THE CAMP
LANDING-STRIP!

The Vanishing Bombers

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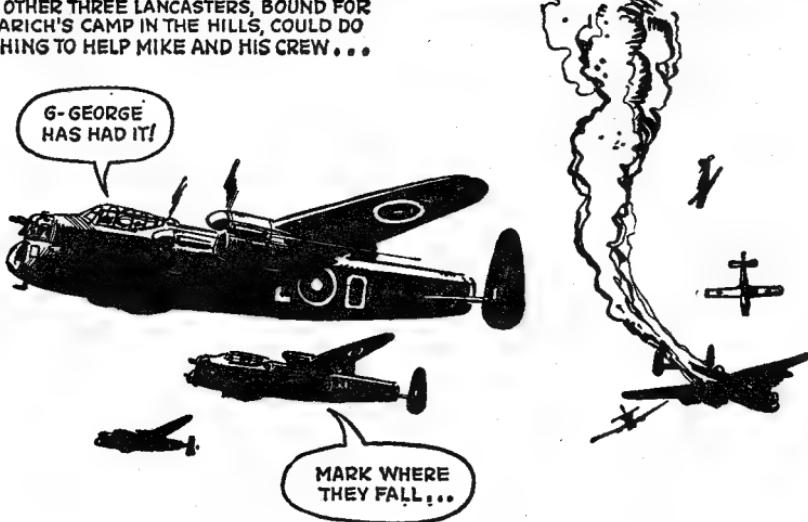
G-GEORGE WAS THE FIRST VICTIM OF THE GERMAN FIGHTERS . . .

THIS FOOLING ABOUT IS NOT THE ORDER OF NOVARICH!

THE PORT ENGINE'S GONE FOR A BURTON, MIKE!



THE OTHER THREE LANCASTERS, BOUND FOR NOVARICH'S CAMP IN THE HILLS, COULD DO NOTHING TO HELP MIKE AND HIS CREW . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

A FINAL FUSILLADE OF CANNON-SHELLS
THUDDED INTO G-GEORGE . . .

I'M GOING TO TRY AND
LAND HER, BUSTER... BUT
YOU GUYS HAD
BETTER JUMP
FOR IT.

WE'LL
STAY WITH
YOU, MIKE.

MIKE DRAGGED THE LABOURING PLANE
EASTWARDS TOWARDS SOME GREEN
FIELDS AMONG THE JAGGED HILLS . . .

THE
JERRY FIGHTERS
HAVE GIVEN UP
THE CHASE . . .
WHO'S POTTING
AT US NOW?

WE'RE
OUT OF LUCK,
MIKE... I THINK
WE'RE LANDING
IN A NEST OF
JERRIES.

The Vanishing Bombers

37

NEXT MOMENT, G-GEORGE SLITHERED ALONG THE GROUND AND CAME TO A HALT NEAR A PATROL OF GERMANS . . .

IT IS FORBIDDEN FOR YOU TO LAND HERE!

TELL IT TO THE KRAUTS, CHARLIE.

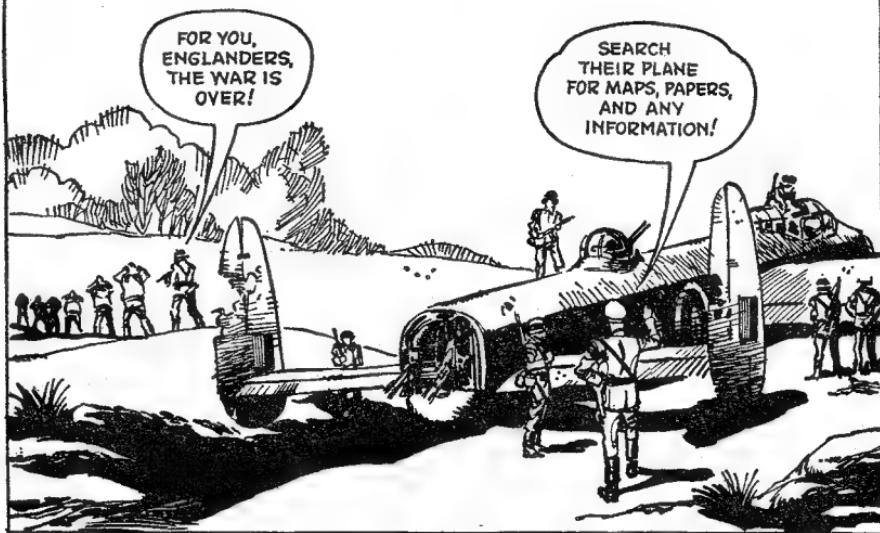
COVERED BY THE GERMAN GUNS, THE CREW LEFT THE PLANE . . .

TAKE THEM AWAY!

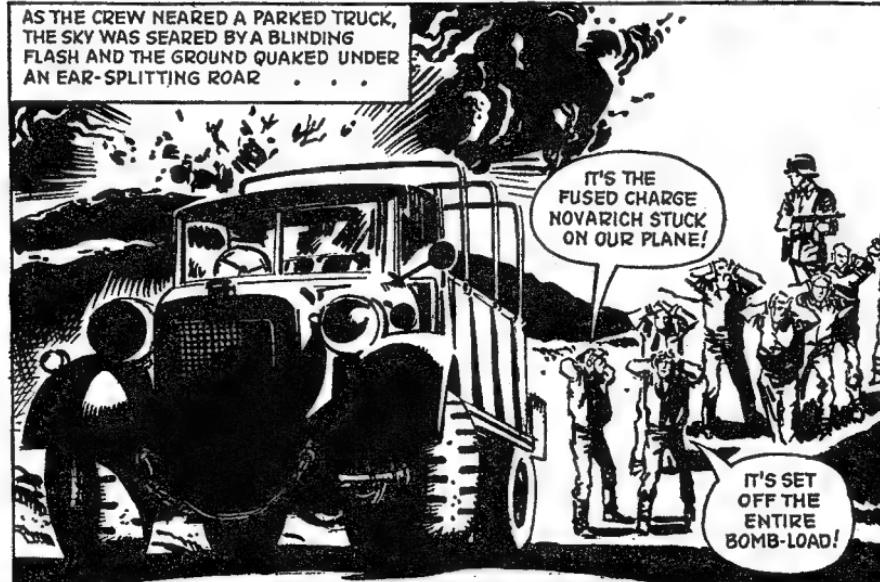
WE'RE OUT OF THE 'FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE!'

The Vanishing Bombers

GLOOMILY, THEY OBEYED THE ORDER TO MOVE . . .



AS THE CREW NEARED A PARKED TRUCK,
THE SKY WAS SEARED BY A BLINDING
FLASH AND THE GROUND QUAKED UNDER
AN EAR-SPLITTING ROAR . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

39

THE DEBRIS OF G-GEORGE WAS SCATTERED
OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE . . .

THE GERMAN DIDN'T REALISE
THAT THE GUERILLA WAS
CREEPING UP BEHIND HIM.

HIMMEL . . .
THE EXPLOSION HAS
KILLED THE WHOLE
OF MY PLATOON!



THE GERMAN WAS KNOCKED SENSELESS — AND
THEN THE GUERILLA WHIPPED ROUND ON THE CREW.

MARCH, INGLISI...
WE RETURN TO
NOVARICH!

WE'RE BACK
IN THE FRYING PAN, MIKE!



Chapter 3. Firing Squad

IT WAS THE NEXT DAY THAT THE WEARY CREW OF G-GEORGE STUMBLED INTO THE CAMP OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS ...

GENERAL NOVARICH WILL SEE
THE LEADER OF THIS CREW . . . PUT THE
OTHERS IN THE GUARDHOUSE . . .

ANYWAY,
OUR OTHER
LANCS LANDED
SAFELY,
BUSTER!



MIKE WAS ESCORTED TO THE WAR-ROOM OF THE GUERILLA LEADER WHO CALLED HIMSELF GENERAL NOVARICH . . .

YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE . . . BUT
BY YOUR ORDERS NO BOMBS
WERE DROPPED ON PETROVIC!

PETROVIC IS
HELD BY THE
PARTISANS AND
BRITISH . . .
NOT BY THE
GERMANS!



The Vanishing Bombers

41

UNGOVERNABLE ANGER BLAZED IN THE EYES OF NOVARICH, AND MIKE KNEW THEN WHY HE WAS CALLED THE TIGER.

THE PARTISAN GROUP REJECT MY LEADERSHIP . . . THEY ARE MY ENEMIES . . . THE GERMANS ARE WILLING TO BARGAIN WITH ME!

YOU DOUBLE-CROSSING QUILSING!



NOVARICH STRODE TO THE DOOR . . .

THE BRITISH WILL GET YOU IN THE END!



ALWAYS
MY MISSIONS
TO THE BRITISH
HAVE COME BACK
EMPTY-HANDED
. . . ALWAYS THE
BRITISH HAVE
FAVoured THE
PARTISANS!

The Vanishing Bombers

THREE WAITING GERMANS ROSE
TO GREET NOVARICH . . .

HEIL, HITLER! MY MISSION HAVE
WAITED OVERLONG FOR YOUR DECISION,
GENERAL NOVARICH!



AS MIKE'S ESCORT ORDERED HIM TO MARCH, COLONEL KRANTZ HALTED THEM...

THERE ARE CONDITIONS TO OUR FRIENDSHIP, GENERAL . . . MY S.S. MEN WILL TAKE OVER THE THREE BRITISH LANCASTERS, AND WILL ALSO—ER—DISPOSE OF THEIR CREWS.



AS
YOU WISH,
COLONEL.

MIKE WAS HANDED OVER TO A GERMAN S.S. OFFICER . . .

WHAT'S THE SCORE, MIKE . . . WHAT ARE S.S. MEN DOING IN THE CAMP?

AT DAWN YOU WILL FIND OUT!



The Vanishing Bombers

43

AS THE SUN LIGHTENED THE EASTERN SKY, A SQUAD OF S.S. TROOPERS CAME FOR THE BRITISH PRISONERS.



THE TRUCKS TOOK THEM UP A WINDING TRACK INTO THE HILLS.

WHAT ARE WE PULLING UP HERE FOR? IT'S MILES FROM ANYWHERE!

PRISONERS, DISMOUNT!



The Vanishing Bombers

THEY HEARD THE RATTLE OF AN AMMUNITION BELT FED INTO A MACHINE-GUN



A COLD-EYED S.S. CAPTAIN MARSHALLED THE SQUAD



AS THE OFFICER SIGNALLED TO HIS MACHINE-GUNNERS, IT WAS ANOTHER GUN THAT CRACKED STACCATO ECHOES IN THE HILLS— A GUN MANNED BY MATNIC!



The Vanishing Bombers

45

THE S.S. MEN FOUGHT BACK WITH
SAVAGE DESPERATION . . .



IN A MINUTE IT WAS OVER . . .



THE RESCUED R.A.F. CREWS WASTED
NO TIME . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

THE MEN WHO WERE
THOUGHT BY NOVARICH
AND THE S.S. TO
BE DEAD, MOVED
IN ON THE
UNSUPECTING
CAMP . . .

AT LEAST A REGIMENT
OF JERRIES MUST BE TAKING
OVER THE VILLAGE . . .
OUR ONE CHANCE
IS A SURPRISE
ATTACK . . .

BUT FIRST I GO
IN THERE . . . ALONE . . .

FOR A MOMENT THERE GLEAMED
IN MATNIC'S EYES THE FURY HE
FELT FOR THE MAN WHO HAD
BETRAYED HIS FOLLOWERS TO
THE GERMANS . . .

GIVE ME TEN MINUTES
BEFORE YOU
ATTACK—
TEN
MINUTES
TO FIND AND
DEAL WITH
NOVARICH, THE
ARCH-TRAITOR

YOU'LL BE
SHOT BEFORE
YOU GET
NEAR HIM!

The Vanishing Bombers

47

MATNIC TOOK NO NOTICE
OF THE WARNING . . .



MATNIC MARCHED UP THE CENTRE OF THE TRACK,
DISREGARDING THE QUICK SUSPICION OF GERMAN
PROWLER GUARDS AND FATIGUE PARTIES . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

ONLY AT THE VILLA HEADQUARTERS OF NOVARICH WAS MATNIC HALTED . . .

THE OFFICER OF NOVARICH'S BODYGUARD SHIFTED HIS PISTOL MENACINGLY . . .

SO YOU HAVE RETURNED, MATNIC . . .
THE TIGER IS DISPLEASED BECAUSE YOU
DISAPPEARED THIS MORNING . . .

I'LL SEE
NOVARICH
NOW . . .



YOUR GUN,
MATNIC . . .
NOVARICH'S
ORDERS!

SO THE
'TIGER HAS
FEARS NOW!



CONTEMPTUOUSLY MATNIC SWUNG THE
HOLSTER AT THE OFFICER, AND AS HE
DID SO . . .

THE FOOL . . . I WARNED ALL
MY GUARDS THAT MATNIC WOULD BE A
DANGER, THAT HE MUST BE SHOT ON
SIGHT!





The Vanishing Bombers



The Vanishing Bombers

51

THE SHOCK-POWER OF THE BULLETS
HURLED THEIR VICTIM ACROSS THE
DESK . . .

BUT WHERE IS
NOVARICH?

MATNIC
IS DEAD!



SUDDENLY ONE OF THE
GUARDS GAVE A HOARSE
YELL . . .

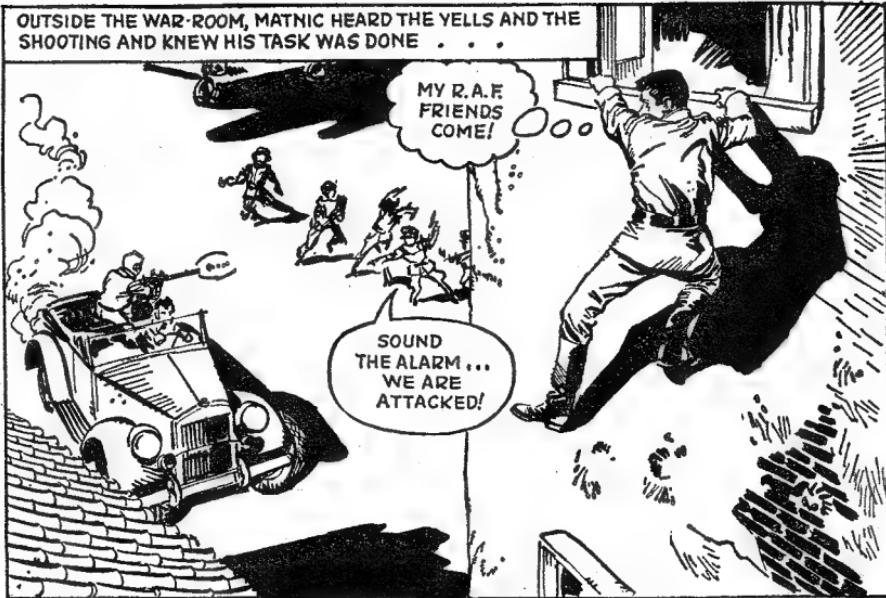
THIS ISN'T
MATNIC . . . WE HAVE
KILLED NOVARICH!

MATNIC MUST
HAVE BEEN HERE . . .
MUST HAVE KNOCKED
THE GENERAL OUT AND
THEN DARTED AWAY!



The Vanishing Bombers

OUTSIDE THE WAR-ROOM, MATNIC HEARD THE YELLS AND THE SHOOTING AND KNEW HIS TASK WAS DONE . . .

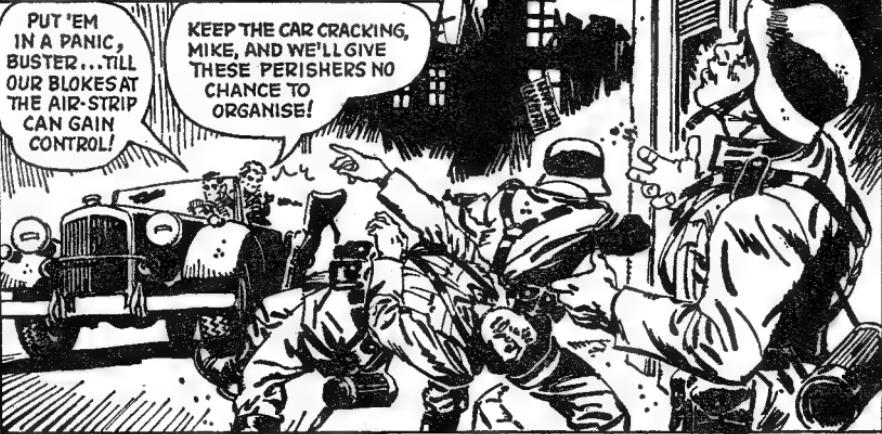


AS MATNIC LANDED, HE WAS SEEN . . .



Chapter 4. The Escape

MIKE, SPEARHEADING THE BRITISH ATTACK IN THE
COMMANDERED GERMAN CAR, KNEW THAT
SURPRISE WAS THEIR ONLY CHANCE AGAINST AN
ENEMY OF REGIMENTAL STRENGTH . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

MIKE WENT INTO A SKIDDING TURN . . .

HOLD
YOUR HAT,
BUSTER!

I'VE
PRANGED
KRANTZ!

THE CAR SPUN AND THEY
ROARED OFF AGAIN . . .

THERE'S
MATNIC . . .
HE'S IN TROUBLE!

WELL,
WE'RE THE
TROUBLE-SHOOTERS
IN THIS SHANTY
TOWN!



The Vanishing Bombers

55

MATNIC MADE A STUMBLING RUN FOR THE CAR . . .



GRENADE IN HAND, MATNIC WAITED
HIS MOMENT AND THREW . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

TWO SECONDS LATER, THE ALLEY BEHIND THEM WAS BLOCKED BY AN EXPLOSION THAT MOMENTARILY DEAFENED THEM . . .



THE LANCASTER CREWS, LEFT BY MIKE TO SETTLE OPPOSITION ON THE AIRSTRIPE, WERE MOPPING UP THE WEAK RESISTANCE THEY HAD HAD TO DEAL WITH . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

57

THE ROAR OF THE POWERFUL ENGINES WAS MUSIC TO THE LANCASTER CREWS WHO SCRAMBLED ABOARD THEIR LIBERATED PLANES . . .



ONE BY ONE, THE PLANES WERE SAFELY AIRBORNE . . .

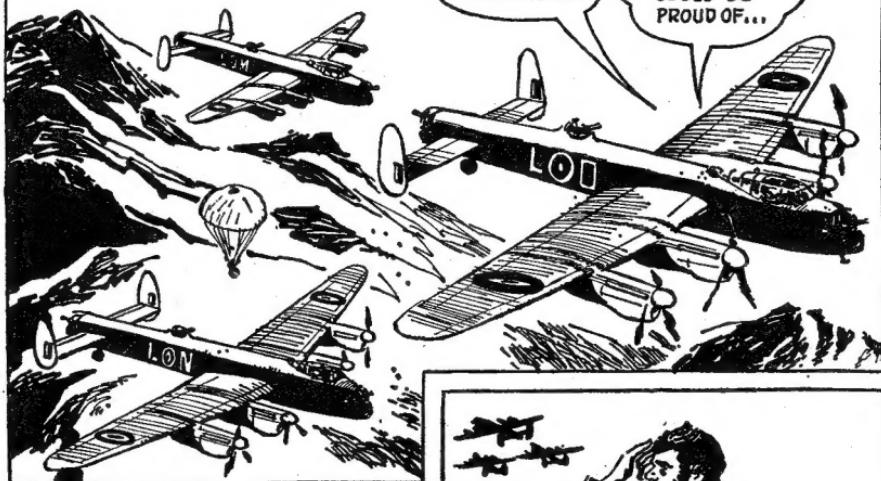


WEARING A PARACHUTE, **MATNIC** WENT TO THE EXIT DOOR, AND MIKE TRIED IN VAIN TO STOP HIM.



The Vanishing Bombers

AS THE LANCASTERS DRONED OVER THE CROSSLAVIAN HILLS, A PARACHUTE FLUTTERED AND DROPPED CLEAR . . .



BEFORE THE LANCASTERS HEADED OUT TO SEA, THEY CIRCLED OVER MATNIC'S LANDING, AND ONE BY ONE THEIR WINGS DIPPED IN SALUTE . . .

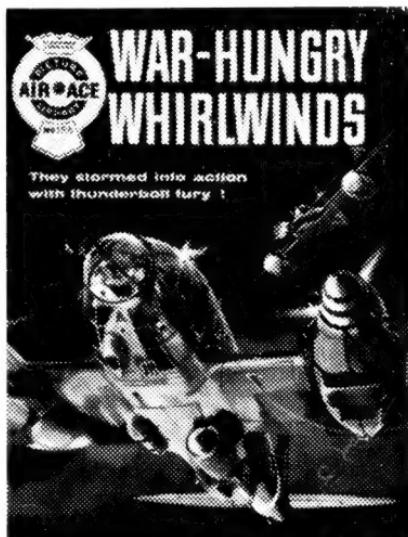


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